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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Poland

SUBJECT Daily Life in Poland: Work Conditions/Use of Alcohol/
Forms of Entertainment/General Morale

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SOURCE

1. "The following information dates up through [redacted] 1953: 25X1C
2. "In Poland, almost everybody works nowadays. Young girls, up to the age of 17-18 attend high school (Gymnasium), but some even begin working at the age of 16-17. They might go into an office or work as a salesgirl, a Bufetowa, [barmaid] waitress, or they might work in the kitchen of some enterprise, or in a plant, etc. Boys also attend high schools, or they learn a trade.
3. "Both boys and young girls join at the age of 17 or 18 the SPD organization (which is the Arbeitsdienst) but I do not know how long their membership lasts. I do not know whether one has to join the SPD or not.
4. "At the age of 21, men are drafted into military service for a period of two to three years. If a man is married (when he is drafted), his wife gets no support not even if they have children, and his wife must go to work. A married woman is not bound to go to work, but in the majority of cases, her husband earns so little that she goes to work in order that the family may live a little better.
5. "However, it might occur that a couple or even a single person does not work. In that case, the UB, the Militia and even the WOP (in the border zones) get busy finding out how the couple or the single person lives (what means of livelihood they have). In view of the fact that in the Karpacz-Bierutowice areas; many thefts are taking place, suspicion naturally falls on those people who do not work; in fact, searches are being made in their homes and many arrests are taking place. If there is no evidence against them, naturally they are set free. However, it might also occur that these people are arrested for Bumelantswo [sedition?]. In all events, it is much better to be employed.

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6. "Every person in Poland must pay special attention to the fact that he shouldn't go too often to places of entertainment (dancing). He should watch the amount of cash he spends. Civilian-dressed UB agents watch all people and guests in, for instance, a coffee house. If a person drinks too much, and in the event he begins talking about politics, or swearing against the regime, Communists, etc then he loses his freedom for many years. The best thing is to keep your mouth shut, because even a neighbor may betray you.
7. "If a person is a habitue, that is, if he goes more often to a coffee house than is usual, and in the event he spends quite large sums, then the UB finds out who he is, where he works, and what he earns. In other words, investigation is made to find out whether he has made any thefts, whether he has misappropriated funds of the enterprise and/or institution where he is employed, whether he has some other private earnings, whether he has some connections with foreign currency smugglings, or whether he has purchased some articles in central Poland which he has then brought into the region where he resides for sale at a higher price. It is forbidden in Poland to purchase articles and resell them for a profit. This kind of people are called speculators and are very severely punished if they are caught. Nevertheless, these speculators are everywhere and grow like mushrooms from the earth when it rains, so many are there nowadays in Poland.
8. "In Poland people drink a great deal of vodka. I have asked many of them why they drink so much. Almost on all occasions I had the same reply: 'What do we get from this life? With vodka we forget anything'. Drunkards are seen everyday lying on the streets. If they are caught by the Militia, they are sent to jail to sober up. During working hours, the use of alcohol is prohibited, but in spite of prohibition people drink. If a supervisor catches a worker drinking, or in the event he is drunk during working hours, the worker gets two warnings. The third time they catch him drinking or drunk, he is fired.
9. "In Poland if a farmer purchases a pig from another farmer (let us say his neighbor), and if they reach an agreement on the price, then they drink together $\frac{1}{2}$ a liter, or even more, of vodka. Without drinking, business cannot be conducted. This naturally holds true not only for farmers but for all private transactions.
10. "In Poland there is an eight-hour day. However, in enterprises such as ORBIS, this is not taken into consideration. In this type of institution and/or enterprise, workers put in 10, 12 and even 15 hours a day; this is because in those institutions there is always much work to do. Wages are very low, and many of the personnel go to another enterprise if they can get better jobs (since there is sufficient work in Poland). Overtime is not paid in these institutions; whether this holds true for all of Poland I do not know. In the majority of cases, premiums in cash are organized for 1 May May Day?, which are handed to various workers, and which might be as much as 100 and even 150 zloty. This takes place as follows. On May Day, many meetings take place throughout Poland, all enterprises and institutions being closed, and the personnel must participate in these meetings. At the end of the mass meetings, the personnel returns to their enterprises, and there the director, vice-director and many others make speeches. After the speeches, some of the workers (not all, of course) are called, and they receive the premium as well as thanks for the work performed. They also are urged to increase their production. Some of the workers, but very few, get an award, the so-called Przodownik Pracy, which is a red medal, and which the Polish State issues only to its best workers.

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13. "The daily routine is as follows: Everyone goes to work, and when working hours are over, the worker is free, provided there are no Zebkanie (meetings). Meetings take place in the enterprise and/or institution, and discussions include almost all kinds of subjects --- work, what is needed, what has to be made, why this or that wasn't yet performed, etc. Everyone is bound to attend these meetings, since a roll call is taken. If a worker is absent, then he must have an excuse. If the excuse is a very good one, then the case is closed, but in any case, it is strongly emphasized to an absentee that another absence might lead to very unpleasant consequences, since every absence will be booked and registered in his personnel file. Any worker has his own personal registry or file, and various things are booked in, i.e. whether he is a good or a bad worker, whether he drinks (for female workers, whether she is slow in her work, not clean, etc). In the event a worker leaves an enterprise and finds a job in another institution, he cannot begin work there until his character references are sent from the last enterprise to the new one. Whether he is hired or not depends on his character reference.

14. "In the event there is no Zebkanie, and one has free time, then in the evening one goes to a movie or dancing or visits some friends and spends the evening with them.

15. "Men, at least in the locality where I resided, live as follows: they drink, play cards, have women (and not a few of these) and eventually go dancing. Women do the following: dance, have men, and drink...Naturally, not all people are like this; there are exceptions, who live normally and quietly. The latter go to a movie, to a dance, from time to time take a drink, sometimes do a little flirting and that is all. When the season is in full swing, there are many changes. Every 14 days, guests (of the various rest centers) come pouring in. Life however, is still the same: work... A movie is too far away (one hour away from [REDACTED]) consequently I went home..work and home, like a robot. For the person who knew the really good life in Poland possible in the good old times, there is now much suffering. Polish morale is lower than any expectation. The motion pictures which can be seen there are all Soviet, French and Czech. In the majority of cases, the subjects of these motion pictures deal with war, or they are propaganda films, with subjects which drive the ordinary person nuts and get on his nerves. However, if a good film does arrive there, then it is impossible to see it, for the auditorium is overcrowded and you can't get a ticket.

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16. "Sometimes in Poland, people get married very young. However, these marriages do not always last for a long time. Then there are divorces. In Poland only a municipal marriage is valid. Religious weddings are not prohibited and one is free to choose. However, the religious wedding or marriage has no legal validity, since a woman married in this way does not get her husband's name (surname). One year ago, that is, in 1952, one could still get married only in the Church. Nowadays, a couple can get married with a religious wedding only after having been married in a civil service. Prior to this provision of law being enforced in Poland, many couples, who were already married in the Church (but not living together) made a new marriage in a civil court. The new civil marriage was fully recognized, while the other (religious) one was not. Couples, married only with the religious rite, are not recognized as married by the Polish State. If a couple intends to get divorced, and supposing that they have not lived together for three years, all that is necessary to get a divorce is to produce two witnesses who will swear that the couple has not been living together for that length of time. This over, the couple is automatically divorced.

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